

REMARKS

Claims 1-24 were presented for examination.

The Office Action dated January 28, 2008 rejects claims 1, 2, 9-12, 16, 18-20, 23, and 24, and objects to claims 3-8, 13-15, 17, 21 and 22 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. The Office Action indicates that claims 3-8, 13-15, 17, 21, and 22 would each be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicant thanks the Examiner for identifying such allowable subject matter.

This paper amends claim 1, 11, 14, 18, and 24, cancels claims 3, 21, and 23, and adds claims 25-30. Claims 1, 2, 4-11, 13-20, 22, and 24-30 are now pending in the application.

Claim 1 is amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 3 identified as allowable by the Office Action. In addition, claim 3 is canceled. This amendment, in effect, rewrites allowable claim 3 in independent form. Consequently, in accordance with the Office Action, claim 1 is now allowable. Dependent claims 2 and 4-10 depend directly from allowable independent claim 1 and therefore are allowable for at least this reason.

Claim 11 is amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 3 identified as allowable by the Office Action. Although claim 11 does not correspond to any particular dependent claim rewritten in independent form, applicant submits that the inclusion of the allowable subject matter of claim 3 into independent claim 11 makes claim 11 allowable. Dependent claims 12-17 depend directly or indirectly from allowable independent claim 11 and therefore are allowable for at least this reason.

Claim 18 is amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 21

identified as allowable by the Office Action. In addition, claim 21 is canceled. This amendment, in effect, rewrites allowable claim 21 in independent form. Dependent claims 19, 20, and 22 depend directly from allowable independent claim 18 and are allowable for at least this reason.

Independent claim 24 is amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 3 identified as allowable in the Office Action. Although claim 24 does not correspond to any particular dependent claim rewritten in independent form, applicant submits that the inclusion of the allowable subject matter of claim 3 into independent claim 24 makes claim 24 allowable.

New Claims 25-30

New independent claim 25 recites the claim language of claim 1 (before this Amendment) in combination with the subject matter of claim 5 identified as allowable by the Office Action. Hence, independent claim 25 is, in effect, allowable claim 5 rewritten in independent form. Therefore, according to the Office Action, claim 25 is allowable as written. Newly added dependent claims 26-28 depend directly from allowable independent claim 25 and are allowable for at least this reason.

New independent claim 29 recites the claim language of claim 11 (before this Amendment) in combination with the subject matter of claim 13 identified as allowable by the Office Action. Thus, independent claim 29 is, in effect, allowable claim 13 rewritten in independent form. Therefore, according to the Office Action, claim 29 is allowable as written. Newly added dependent claim 30 depends directly from allowable independent claim 29 and is therefore allowable for at least this reason.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Office Action rejects claims 1-2 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Thiele (U.S. Patent No. 3,372,789), claims 9-10 over Thiele and in view of McDonald (U.S. Patent No. 4,334,280), claim 11 over Katrinecz, Jr. (U.S. Publication No. 2001/0002166), claim 12 over McDonald in view of Thiele, and further in view of Ostergard (U.S. Publication No. 20003/0202336), claim 16 over Katrinecz, Jr. in view of Thiele and further in view of McDonald, rejects claims 18-20 over Katrinecz, Jr. in view of Kaikuranta et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2001/0048379), claim 23 over Thiele, and claim 24 over Katrinecz, Jr. in view of Thiele.

In view of the amendment of independent claims 1, 11, 18, and 24 to include subject matter identified as allowable by the Office Action into each of these claims, applicant submits that these rejections are moot.

CONCLUSION

Applicant submits that this paper provides a response for all pending claims. Any absence of a reply to a specific rejection, issue, or comment, or to any taking of official notice or reliance on common sense, however, does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue, comment, taking of official notice, or reliance on common sense. In addition, because the arguments made above are not exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims that have not been expressed.

In view of the amendments and arguments provided herein, applicant submits that the application is in condition for allowance and requests early favorable action by the Examiner.

If the Examiner believes that a telephone conversation with the applicant's representative would expedite allowance of this application, the

Examiner is cordially invited to call the undersigned at (508) 303-0932.

Respectfully submitted,

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Reg. No. 41,274

Tel. No.: (508) 303-0932

Fax No.: (508) 303-0005

/Michael A. Rodriguez/

Michael A. Rodriguez

Attorney for applicant

Guerin & Rodriguez, LLP

5 Mount Royal Avenue

Marlborough, MA 01752